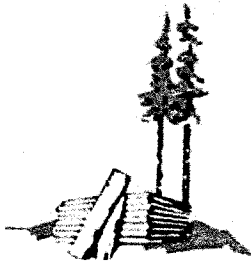


EXHIBIT 4
DATE 2/16/11
HB 4108



F.H. STOLTZE LAND & LUMBER COMPANY

Lumber Manufacturers

Box 1429 Columbia Falls, MT 59912
Phone (406) 892-7005 Fax (406) 892-1612
www.stoltzelumber.com

February 15, 2011



Good for you. Good for our forests.™

Member Company

House Natural Resources Committee
Chairman Gordon Hendrick
Montana House of Representatives
P.O. Box 200400
Helena, MT 59620-0400

RE: HB 468 "Generally revise laws regarding use of aircraft by any state agency"

Chairman Hendrick and Members of the Committee,

Please accept the following comments in opposition of HB 468 on behalf of F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Company. Stoltze is the oldest family owned sawmill and timberland company in Montana. We own and sustainably manage 38,000 acres of forestland in northwestern Montana.



Member Since 1966

We understand that while this bill would affect all use of aircraft by a state agency. Our specific area of concern is the use of both helicopter and fixed wing aircraft owned and operated by the DNRC in conjunction with fire detection and initial attack suppression activities. The DNRC fire and aviation program's role in early detection and suppression of wildfire is an undisputed success. The value returned to the tax payer from this program is extremely high in relationship to the cost.

Stoltze is a strong supporter of private enterprise. While the statement in the purpose of the bill "...private business is able to provide many services in a more cost-effective and economical manner than government..." is generally true, the State aerial fire detection and aerial initial attack program is an exception. According to a 2008 legislative audit, the DNRC fire aviation program is able to provide aerial detection and initial attack suppression support for roughly 1/3rd the cost of private industry.

Over 95% of Stoltze property is under DNRC fire protection. I have first-hand experience on multiple occasions where DNRC detection planes have detected small fires and lightning strikes that we were not able to locate on the ground. These aerial detection planes not only find the fire, they direct ground suppression forces to the scene, suggest suppression tactics and resources needed, direct aerial suppression activities and act as eyes in the sky to help ensure firefighter safety. The combination of personnel (pilots and



Charter Member

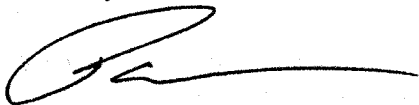
observers) familiar with the terrain, fuel and fire behavior, access routes and resources available is directly related to the 98% success rate of initial attack fire suppression by DNRC. DNRC helicopters and crews have on multiple occasions been the deciding factor in whether a small fire on our lands was contained or escaped.

Fire suppression is a difficult business as there is little predictability. Dedicated private fire suppression contractors necessarily need to build extra cost into their services to account for the irregularity of work. The DNRC simply cannot afford to pay a private contractor to be on standby for detection and initial attack services. There is certainly opportunity for private industry to augment government forces on extended attack fires. Most contractors used in this way view firefighting as an additional element of their business plan and not the primary element. This allows them to be more cost competitive as firefighting is not the only use of their equipment.

We understand that DNRC enjoys some advantage over private industry in how they acquire, maintain and staff their aircraft by using military surplus parts and part time pilots. In our opinion, this is a wise use of available resources and tax payer dollars. Legislative audits have shown this program has been fiscally responsible and traditionally returned good value to the tax payer.

On rare occasion, the government is able to be more cost effective in providing services than private industry. We feel strongly that the DNRC fire aviation program is one of those rare occasions. We urge you to table this bill and seek other opportunities to help support the private aviation industry that would not eliminate a very successful State program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul R. McKenzie', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Paul R. McKenzie C.F.
Lands & Resource Manager